

News Release



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

US Army Corp Change May Lead to Restricted Vehicle Access at Oceano Dunes

An apparent mistake by the US Army Corps of Engineers may result in restrictions to beach access to the popular Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) as early as this weekend, the State Department of Parks and Recreation announced today. The problem is due to large amounts of sand that cannot be removed at the park's entry stations. That sand could hamper motorized access.

Maintenance of the access ramps at Grand Avenue in Grover Beach and Pier Avenue in Oceano has been conducted under permits issued by several agencies, including the US Army Corps of Engineers. Superintendent Dennis Doberneck said California State Parks was notified one week before the expiration of the Army Corps permit that the Corp had made a mistake and that the permit could not be extended. Instead, Doberneck said, an entirely new permit is now being required, a process that could take as long as six months.

Sand conditions on the access ramps onto the beach are such that entering or leaving the recreation area may be difficult. However, Doberneck said, the Park is not closed. "It's an unfortunate situation for our visitors, but it is an issue that is out of our control," said Doberneck.

Efforts to obtain alternative permits are under way, and a short-term solution is being pursued, according to Doberneck. In the meantime, he said, State Parks does not have the legal authority to maintain the ramps which means sand that piles up cannot be removed.

According to Doberneck, two-wheeled drive vehicles may not be able to enter or leave the recreation area without assistance. However, privately operated tow service is available for a fee.

California State Parks on the Internet: <<http://www.parks.ca.gov>>

Oceano Dunes, which recorded more than 1.2 million visitors in 2000, is located near Grover Beach in San Luis Obispo County and on the ocean near Pismo Beach.

It is the only State Park in California where vehicles are permitted to drive and camp on the beach, and represents the last 5 ½ miles of California's 1,600 miles of Coastline where vehicles are allowed to access the beach.

An average of about 970 vehicles per day on weekends would be denied access to the recreation area. The potential economic impact to the local communities should access be denied would be about \$223,200 per day on the weekend and \$86,000 per day on weekdays.

Visitors are encouraged to telephone (805) 473-7220 before traveling to the Park.

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